

NOVENA TO SAINT ANNE

Daniel A. Lord, S.J.

FIRST DAY:

“Who shall find a valiant woman?”

This was the cry of Solomon long before the time of the noble women who watched for Christ’s coming to earth. The valiant woman . . . strong in her stainless virtue.

The valiant woman . . . keeping the laws and traditions of her people. The valiant woman . . . fighting the quiet battle of purity and decency.

The valiant woman . . . protecting her home, the strength of her husband, and the future of her children. The valiant woman . . . whom God loves and whom the powers of evil dread as their relentless enemy. The valiant woman . . . like glorious Saint Anne, mother of Mary.

The Catholic world has looked in admiration to and has reached out in confidence to Saint Anne. We have received protection and generous love from Saint Anne.

To the grandmother of Christ, we pray:

Prayer of Saint Anne

O God, who didst vouchsafe to endow blessed Anne with such grace that she was found worthy to be the mother of her who brought forth Thine only-begotten Son, grant in Thy mercy that we who keep her festival may be aided by her intercession with Thee. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who livest and reignest with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

SECOND DAY:

Mary, the Mother of God, spent her girlhood in the peaceful little house of Anne and Joachim. There, Mary knew the example of a woman who lived the simple ways of wife and mother.

Unknown save in the limited circle of Nazareth, Anne prepared the meals for her family, made and mended their plain garments, and filled the house with the perfume of her devoted service. She was a model of a wife’s diligence and a mother’s solicitude.

The young Mary watched this model of the simple domestic virtues.

This obedient daughter saw perfection in her mother, the perfection of small tasks done out of love for God and devotion to family.

Each day had a time for prayer.

Each day was filled with deeds of neighborliness and acts of charity, quietly and happily performed.

Mary saw in her mother how a woman can be simple yet great, how the deeds that God asks of us—however unnoticed or unimportant these may be—are the deeds that win His gratitude and make us saints before Him and benefactors before the world.

To this model of the simple domestic virtue, we pray:

Prayer of Saint Anne

O God, who didst vouchsafe to endow blessed Anne with such grace that she was found worthy to be the mother of her who brought forth Thine only-begotten Son, grant in Thy mercy that we who keep her festival may be aided by her intercession with Thee. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who livest and reignest with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

THIRD DAY:

Like all Jewish women of her day, Anne dreamed of the promised Savior. Surely, the Messias was sorely needed in her day when the plight of her people was so unhappy.

Never for a moment did she think that such an honor would come to her—but perhaps from her line, the noble line of David, there would come a woman worthy to be the Mother of the Messias.

Anne was not given the beautiful privilege of motherhood.

She prayed that God would send them a son or a daughter.

Neighbors pitied her, as the Jews always pitied a childless woman. A flock of nieces and nephews grew up around her, but no child of her own came to rest in her arms.

She prayed for a child and, in the same breath, she added, “. . . if it be Thy will, my Father.”

She showed no impatience with God, no envy of more fortunate relatives, and no self-pity. However, her hope never faded and neither did her faith in God, who would do for her what was for His honor and her happiness.

It is no wonder that the beautiful little girl who was Mary, fairest flower of womankind, was born to Anne in her old age.

To this model of hope, we pray:

Prayer of Saint Anne

O God, who didst vouchsafe to endow blessed Anne with such grace that she was found worthy to be the mother of her who brought forth Thine only-begotten Son, grant in Thy mercy that we who keep her festival may be aided by her intercession with Thee. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who livest and reignest with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

FOURTH DAY:

Hope is a beautiful virtue.

Hope without prayer is a wasted thing. It is groundless optimism without root in faith.

We hope because we know that God in His love will do what is best for us. We pray so He may know our desires and that, if they are for our good, He may fulfill them.

In the long days of patient waiting before the coming of Mary, Anne prayed from a humble and a loving heart. Her life was a long simple prayer committing her to God's Holy will.

Of a Sabbath, she and Joachim went together to the synagogue to pray with the other faithful Jews, who cried aloud for the long-delayed Savior.

At daybreak, she offered to God in heaven everything that she would do throughout the day.

Before and after meals, she thanked the Creator of the universe for the gifts of His Fatherly goodness. At night, she looked back upon the day and presented it as a gift to God.

Always underlying her prayer was the hope that the Savior would soon be born and that God would send her a child—perhaps the child who would be nurse to the Messias.

To this model of prayer, we pray:

Prayer of Saint Anne

O God, who didst vouchsafe to endow blessed Anne with such grace that she was found worthy to be the mother of her who brought forth Thine only-begotten Son, grant in Thy mercy that we who keep her festival may be aided by her intercession with Thee. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who livest and reignest with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

FIFTH DAY:

Joachim and Anne were coming into late middle age. The hope that they would have children seemed almost past.

They had prayed longingly for a child. Now they hardly dared hope any longer.

Then—the wonder. Anne conceived and the happy pair knew they would be parents.

If there had been peace in the house before, now there was deepest joy. God had answered their petitions. God had blessed them with parenthood.

If Anne had hitherto done gladly the simple work of her household, she now did it with new purpose and high happiness. The house must be spotless for the coming child. Little dresses must be made and quilts and pillows sewed.

Each Sabbath in the synagogue, Anne upon her knees thanked God, who had blessed her.

Each morning and each night she prayed the Father in heaven to bless the child she was to bear with the fullness of grace and the richness of a life devoted to His service.

Then, Mary, the loveliest infant that the world had ever seen until that day, was born. Anne

smiled into the happy eyes of Joachim. Together, they loved little Mary, their gift from God. To the happy mother of Mary, we pray:

Prayer of Saint Anne

O God, who didst vouchsafe to endow blessed Anne with such grace that she was found worthy to be the mother of her who brought forth Thine only-begotten Son, grant in Thy mercy that we who keep her festival may be aided by her intercession with Thee. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who livest and reignest with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

SIXTH DAY:

Who can describe the joy that came to the house of Anne and Joachim with the coming of Mary? Never had a sweeter baby smiled into a mother's face.

Never had a more obedient child grown up to bring happiness to a household. Her first spoken words were music in their ears.

Her first conscious kiss was a blessing and the sweet mark of her gratitude to her parents.

She listened avidly to Anne's telling of the story of God's dealings with His people. She heard from Anne for the first time about the Savior who was to be born.

She learned from Anne the gentle arts that she was later to use as Mother of the Son of God. It was from Anne that she learned the dignity of a woman's work.

Now, there was laughter in the house—the happy young laughter of a sinless child. The hearts of Anne and Joachim echoed to that laughter in delight with a sense of gracious fulfillment.

God had been slow to answer their prayers. His answer had come in measure far beyond their fondest hopes. They put their trust in God's Providence and their trust was not in vain.

To this model set before the child Mary, we pray:

Prayer of Saint Anne

O God, who didst vouchsafe to endow blessed Anne with such grace that she was found worthy to be the mother of her who brought forth Thine only-begotten Son, grant in Thy mercy that we who keep her festival may be aided by her intercession with Thee. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who livest and reignest with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

SEVENTH DAY:

Was Anne still alive when Mary became the Mother of the Savior?

Was it ever Anne's grandmotherly privilege to hold the Infant King in her arms?

We do not know. The silence of the Scriptures leads us to think that perhaps she had already

gone home to God, that she had left her daughter to the gracious care of Joseph, and that she was never to see her divine Grandson until, as liberator, He entered limbo.

Whether she lived to see that happy day or not, the spirit of her devotion, her calm serenity, her patience, and her kindness lived on in the life of Mary.

Mary learned the art of motherhood from Anne. What Anne had done for her, Mary did for her little Son.

Mary prepared food for her growing Boy like the food she had eaten at her mother's table.

As her Son grew in age, wisdom, and grace, Mary passed on the prayers, the story of the Jewish people, the strong words of the law, and the prophet's hope-bearing words that she had learned from Anne, her mother. The imprint of Anne's training could be seen on the Son of God Himself through Mary, His Blessed Mother.

To this model of motherhood, we pray:

Prayer of Saint Anne

O God, who didst vouchsafe to endow blessed Anne with such grace that she was found worthy to be the mother of her who brought forth Thine only-begotten Son, grant in Thy mercy that we who keep her festival may be aided by her intercession with Thee. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who livest and reignest with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

EIGHTH DAY:

Next to Mary, Anne is the favorite name for all the world.

It is the symbol of her motherly virtues. It is so intimately associated with Mary and with Jesus that it commands our affection.

Each year, thousands of girl babies are named for the mother of Mary.

Time was when the highest honor that could be conferred upon a baby girl was to call her Mary Anne, linking in a double name the virtue and intercession of the world's two most powerful women.

Today that name remains the symbol of strength and power.

We call upon Anne, knowing that the Savior will listen to the prayers of His devoted grandmother.

We ask favors and blessings in her name, sure that the God who chose her daughter to be His Mother will be generous to the woman who shaped His Mother to her high career.

Fortunate the woman whose name is Anne.

Blessed the millions across the world who pray to the great Saint Anne, knowing that her name is dear to God and that prayer to her is prayer that the Savior, her Grandson, will willingly heed.

To her, whose name and fame we love, we pray:

Prayer of Saint Anne

O God, who didst vouchsafe to endow blessed Anne with such grace that she was found worthy to be the mother of her who brought forth Thine only-begotten Son, grant in Thy mercy that we who keep her festival may be aided by her intercession with Thee. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who livest and reignest with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

NINTH DAY:

All her life Anne lived in the obscure town of Nazareth.

All her days were spent in a tiny house—a home of common people.

Her ancestors might have lived in the royal palaces of David and his descendants. It was Anne's destiny to know no palaces and to be content with a cottage that was made beautiful chiefly by the love that filled it. But, Anne was great.

A thousand, thousand churches are built to her name.

A thousand schools and hospitals are erected under her patronage.

Pilgrims by the millions pour every year into her shrines, kneeling before her altars and begging her to remember them to God.

Unknown in her own day, she is now known across the world.

Having lived during her lifetime in a little cottage, she is now honored by great buildings of the world.

From her mansion in heaven, Saint Anne looks down to see once more how the buildings that bear her name shelter the Son of God, house the shrines of Mary His Mother, and serve for the peace and strength of God's sons and daughters of every generation.

To her, who was honored on earth and is enthroned in heaven, we pray:

Prayer of Saint Anne

O God, who didst vouchsafe to endow blessed Anne with such grace that she was found worthy to be the mother of her who brought forth Thine only-begotten Son, grant in Thy mercy that we who keep her festival may be aided by her intercession with Thee. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who livest and reignest with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

Nihil Obstat:

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